



SOFTWARE

FAQ

Q Is there any way I can back up my Outlook contacts and calendar information on the internet?

A This is easy with AirSet (www.airset.com). This free web service gives you an online calendar and contacts database, which you can view from any standard web browser.

AirSet also has a Desktop Sync tool, which you install on your PC. This synchronises your Outlook calendar and contacts with the website, and you can set it up to make hourly updates. You can also choose which data you want to synchronise: calendar, contacts or both.



You can synchronise your Outlook contacts and calendar with AirSet's internet service

AirSet is more than just a personal backup tool, though. You can also create shared space, which makes it good for business and social clubs. Each shared space has a calendar, contacts and a blog. The service is free, so try it out now. Look out for a *How To...* on AirSet in a forthcoming issue.

Q Many programs seem to support Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF). Why would I want to use it?

A If you save a file in a program's native file format, such as .doc for Microsoft Word, other people can view that file only if they have the same version of that application. Even then, there's no guarantee they'll see exactly the same layout you saw. What's more, an application that's available for the PC may not be available for the Mac, so you can't share the files with Mac users.

To view a PDF you need a copy of Adobe's Reader, which is available for all major operating systems. A PDF file contains all the formatting and layout information, pictures and fonts needed to recreate the file, which means it looks exactly as the creator intended on any computer. This makes it easy to transfer files between different computers. Having native PDF support in an application is very useful, as it means you can save documents in this format without having to buy a third-party conversion tool.

david@computershopper.co.uk

REVIEW DVD-AUTHORING SOFTWARE

SONIC SOLUTIONS
DVDit Pro 6

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £270 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.roxio.co.uk

DETAILS www.sonic.com

All video-editing applications include some kind of DVD-authoring capability, but few give precise control over how discs look and behave. DVDit was one of the first applications to provide advanced DVD-authoring tools for the PC, but now the market is considerably more crowded. The previous version of DVDit was underpowered compared with Adobe Encore DVD, Ulead DVD Workshop and Sony DVD Architect. DVDit 6 aims to make up lost ground and offers radical improvements over previous versions. Sonic has discontinued DVD Producer, which retailed for over £1,000, to make way for DVDit Pro 6, the version we tested.

The new screen layout comprises various floating windows, which you can resize, rearrange and split over two monitors. You can save and recall layouts, but only the preset layouts are accessible through keyboard shortcuts. The software assumes a basic grasp of the mechanics of DVD Video media but is satisfyingly straightforward to use in the main. Dragging media on to menus works as expected. You can convert any menu object into a link simply by dragging an imported video clip, known as a title, or other menu on to it.

DVDit's menu design was already strong, but now it's even better, enabling you to adjust the opacity, contrast, brightness, hue and saturation of menu buttons, text and backgrounds. Objects can be rotated, and it's easy to import your own buttons with custom highlight masks from Photoshop or other image-editing applications that support .psd files.

Versions 6 of DVDit introduces Playlists, which allow you to arrange titles in different orders on the same disc. These are simple to set up, although on some DVD players the chapter buttons will override them. It's a shame DVDit can't disable specific remote control buttons during playback, as this would provide a workaround.

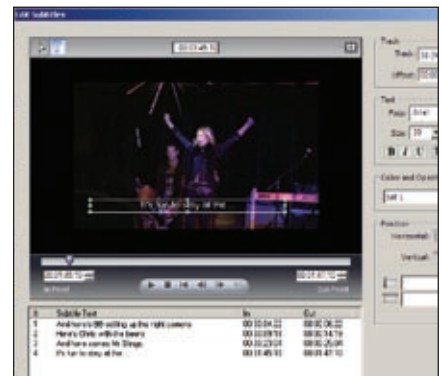
MAKING ADVANCES

DVDit Pro adds various advanced features, including support for region coding, CSS encryption and Macrovision, although these are available only when writing to DLT, which is the standard medium DVD duplication facilities use. Each title can have up to eight audio tracks and 32 subtitles, and comprehensive subtitle editing and formatting is included, although this area of the software is less responsive than others.

DVDit can get complicated when you start to delve into its more advanced navigation functions. Menus and titles each have their own end actions, but these can be overridden depending on the context. DVDit's options are comprehensive, and you can choose which menu link is highlighted by default depending on where the user came from. You can also delay links on a menu for a set period and even define what the Menu remote control buttons link to in each menu and title. However, it's easy to lose track of what links to what, especially



DVDit Pro's interface is slick, but the sheer number of options and quirks can make it tricky to use



Subtitle support is comprehensive, with up to 32 tracks and extensive formatting options

when the software uses names such as 'Movie 1: Movie 4' if you reorder titles. Why the title names don't simply default to the source filename is a mystery.

DVDit remains the only authoring program we know that can't preview motion menus without rendering them first. Interlaced footage still looks awful during previews, a problem that's exacerbated by the fact that previews aren't displayed at the native PAL resolution. It's too easy to truncate the top of text objects accidentally. You can dictate the order in which buttons on a menu are navigated, but the numbering system is cryptic. We also experienced various bugs: for instance, the disc space meter doesn't update when truncating titles, and any attempts to replace a title that was used in a playlist invariably resulted in a crash.

The latest version of DVDit is certainly a sophisticated program, but its price has increased accordingly, and it takes patience and dedication to benefit from many of its advanced features. Sony DVD Architect 3 lacks a few features but is far quicker and easier to use, particularly in its subtitling and disc navigation. If you want highly customisable menu design, but reasonably straightforward navigation options, DVD Architect Studio, which is bundled with Vegas Movie Studio for £75 including VAT, does the job superbly.

Ben Pitt



Exhaustive feature list, especially for advanced disc navigation



Lots of small problems blight an otherwise-accessible interface

REQUIREMENTS Windows XP SP2, 800MHz Pentium III processor, 128MB RAM (2GB P4, 512MB recommended), 10GB disk space, Windows Media Player 10. **Product code** 223200



REVIEW 3D GRAPHICS AND ANIMATION

EOVIA
Carrara 5

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £199 inc VAT

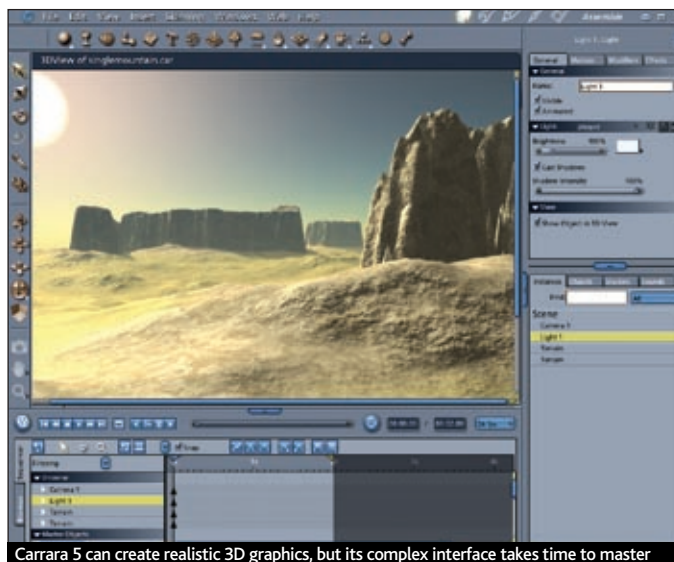
SUPPLIER www.unlimited.comDETAILS www.eovia.com

Carrara is excellent value. This 3D graphics and animation program provides an impressive range of features, yet its £199 price is an absolute bargain by most 3D software's standards.

This latest version of Carrara includes several powerful tools and features that will appeal to anyone who does a lot of 3D design work. There are some oddly named options, such as ambient occlusion and subsurface scattering, which are simply better and more realistic lighting effects. Improved OpenGL support speeds up the rendering of complex 3D scenes. We noticed the speed improvement, even when designing models on a laptop that had a fairly modest GeForce Go 420 graphics chip.

The improved particle generator is impressive. Many 3D programs have particle generators that can create effects such as flowing droplets of water or exploding shrapnel. Carrara's particle generator allows you to create an object, such as a bird, and treat it as a particle. You can then use the particle generator to create automatically a vast flock of birds that swoops across the screen.

Features such as this will have experienced 3D designers and animators frothing at the mouth, but



Carrara 5 can create realistic 3D graphics, but its complex interface takes time to master

Carrara falls down in its attempts to make them accessible to new users. Take the particle generator, for example: click on the Particle tool in the main toolbar, and you're presented with a huge dialog box that fills almost the entire screen with dozens of different settings and options. It will take you a while to figure out how to create your flock of birds, and the task isn't made any easier by the online Help files, which simply list various features without explaining how to use them.

To be fair, Eovia has made some attempts to improve Carrara's ease of use in this upgrade. The program throws wizards at you from the moment you launch it. A Browser pane at the bottom of the

screen allows you to select a variety of ready-made 3D scenes and effects. There's also a Wizards command in the main File menu. Even the standard New File command asks if you want to use one of the wizards to create a new scene. These wizards allow you to create a wide range of indoor and outdoor scenes quickly, along with effects such as mountain ranges, clouds and flowing water. But once you select a wizard, the program drops you in at the deep end and leaves you to find your way around its vast array of tools and dialog boxes.

This is one of the most powerful all-round modelling and animation programs available in the sub-£500 price range. However, its ease of use is still a problem, and it's not the best place to start if you're new to 3D graphics work.

Cliff Joseph

✓ Extremely powerful 3D graphics tools at an attractive price

✗ Beginners will struggle with the complex and confusing interface

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or later, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 300MB disk space, OpenGL graphics card

HOTLIST OFFICE SUITE

ABILITY SOFTWARE
Ability Office 4

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Professional Edition £50 inc VAT

(upgrade £25); Standard/Small Business

Edition £40 inc VAT (upgrade £20)

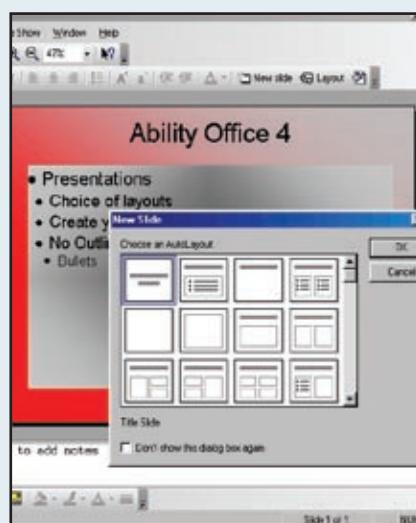
DETAILS www.ability.com

Buying an office suite doesn't necessarily mean spending a lot of money, as Ability shows us with its Office 4 suite. For just £50 for the Professional Edition, it undercuts the competition by a mile but still offers a functional package.

The latest version introduces the new Presentation program, which competes against Microsoft's PowerPoint. It's compatible with its competitor, bar a couple of features such as embedded video. This means that a few PowerPoint presentations won't open properly in Ability and you'll have to start your work from scratch. To facilitate this, Ability offers 20 slide layouts for slideshows.

The other big feature is Ability Mail. It's not included on the CD, but is available as a free download from the Ability website for registered users. It's the final piece in the puzzle for moving away from a Microsoft-based productivity suite.

Ability Office 4 also updates Ability Database. One of the strengths of the suite, the database



now provides easier form design and reporting. Ability Write has the welcome additions of Autocorrect, Autotext and Grammar Checker. These features put the application on a par with Microsoft Word.

For the price it's very good value, although we recommend downloading the trial version to make sure all the features you need are present.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 100MB disk space

HOTLIST VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

SONY
Vegas Movie Studio
+DVD Platinum Edition 6

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £99 inc VAT

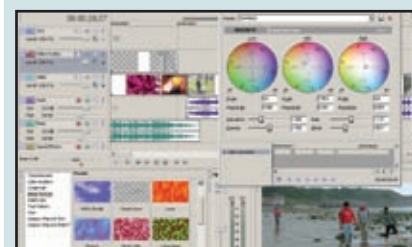
SUPPLIER SCV London 020 8418 1470

DETAILS www.sonymediasoftware.com

Platinum Edition is new to the Vegas family and adds support for High-Definition Video (HDV) cameras. With a range of new effects over the standard edition, including the excellent Colour Corrector, it's well worth the extra £15.

Movie Studio has finally caught up and even surpassed its rival, Adobe's Premiere Elements.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 200MB disk space. Product code SPVMSDV6000



REVIEW PAINTING SOFTWARE**DAN RITCHIE**
Project Dogwaffle Professional

RATING ★★★★★

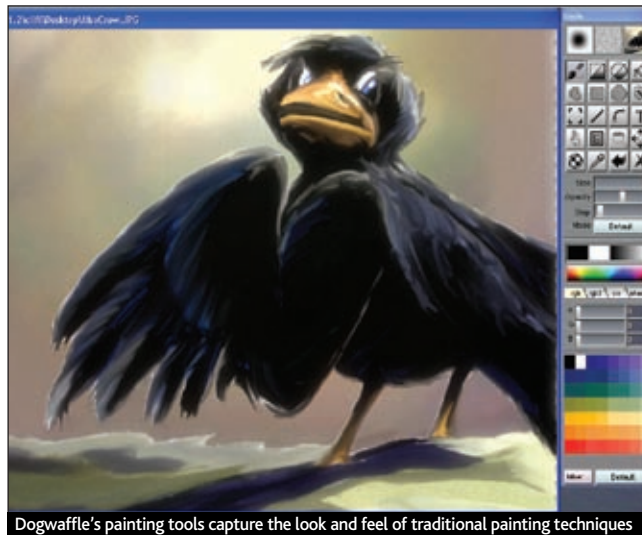
PRICE £60 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Fast Trak Software 01923 495496,
www.fasttrak.co.ukDETAILS www.squirrelldome.com

Dan Ritchie is a computer graphics expert who has worked on big-name projects such as *Spider-Man 2* and *Star Trek Voyager*. He also happens to be a dab hand at programming and, in a lull between Hollywood blockbusters, he decided to create his own painting program.

Like Corel's recently released Painter Essentials, Project Dogwaffle Professional is an inexpensive painting program that enables you to reproduce the effects of painting with traditional materials such as oil paints and watercolours. It offers a wider range of materials and brush types than Painter Essentials, though, including options such as drippy pen, wet tempera and modelling clay, along with dozens of variations on the basic watercolour and oil brushes. These brushes work really well, producing realistic effects onscreen. The watercolour brushes give a genuinely watery appearance, producing a dark colour under the thick part of the brush and a thinner, lighter coating of colour on the outer edges.

You'll need a bit of artistic talent to get the best out of these tools – not to mention a graphics



Dogwaffle's painting tools capture the look and feel of traditional painting techniques

tablet – but there is some help for less-experienced artists. In case your drawing hand is a bit unsteady, there are options to help you draw straight lines and smooth curves, plus fill tools that let you outline and fill large areas with colour quickly.

Dogwaffle has a very wide range of effects filters you can use to liven up your work, including a Brush Strokes filter. This can apply any of the program's brush styles to a digital photo to give it the appearance of a hand-drawn sketch. Painter Essentials does something similar with its cloning brushes, but Dogwaffle produces better results. It even throws in some animation tools.

Dan Ritchie may be talented and creative, but he thinks like a programmer. Many aspects of

Dogwaffle will seem complicated and confusing to home users and amateur artists. There's too much technical jargon. Documents and paintings are referred to as buffers, for example, and terms such as 'invert alpha' are used with no explanation of what they mean. The interface is also untidy. There's no Close command, so the only way to close an image is to create a new one. There's no Edit menu either, and to perform a simple task such as selecting and copying part of an image, we had to trawl through the online Help files for answers.

We also found that the program crashed occasionally

when we were working on imported photos.

Dogwaffle has enormous potential. Its basic painting tools are excellent and produce better results than those of Painter Essentials. However, the program's complexity makes it more suitable for experienced computer graphics artists than home users who just want to dabble.

Cliff Joseph

✓ Effective and versatile; natural media painting tools

✗ Complex jargon; rough edges on interface; the occasional crash

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or later, 500MHz processor, 256MB RAM

HOTLIST INTERNET SECURITY SOFTWARE**STEGANOS**
Internet Security 2006

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £35 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Steganos 00800 78342667

DETAILS www.steganos.co.uk

Steganos's Internet Security suite is a comprehensive bundle of utilities that aims to protect your computer against the main threats on the internet: viruses, hackers, spyware and spam.

The suite is a collection of separate applications that have been licensed individually from other developers. What's more, they all work really well. This package is an absolute bargain and is all you need to protect your PC.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 100MB disk space

**HOTLIST PC RECOVERY****INVOLUTION**
RecoverPC

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.hacyonics.co.ukDETAILS www.recoverpc.com

When your PC goes catastrophically wrong and you can't even start Windows, RecoverPC can help. This PCI card fits into a free slot and lets you access a hidden partition. A few seconds later, you'll be able to restore your PC to a working state.

It's amazingly quick, works really well and is good value. But make sure you back up your documents regularly or they'll be overwritten.



REQUIREMENTS Free PCI slot. Product code 5060094150000

HOTLIST MUSIC PRODUCTION SOFTWARE**ABLETON**
Live 5

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £265 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.gear4music.comDETAILS www.ableton.com

Ableton Live is an extraordinary piece of software, designed to help you produce your live performance. Its excellent Session View lets you trigger recorded clips on the fly, making the software more of an instrument than a recording platform. If you plan to perform on stage, there's no better choice than Live.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, 600MHz processor, 512MB RAM. Product code 28683





REVIEW LINUX WEB HOSTING

FASTHOSTS
Linux Standard

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £4.69 a month or £52 a year inc VAT

SUPPLIER Fasthosts 0870 888 3600

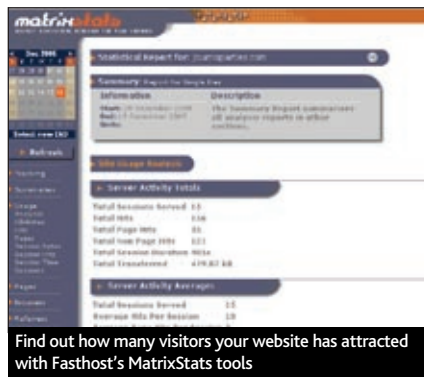
DETAILS www.fasthosts.co.uk

If you're serious about creating a website, you need a dedicated hosting package. This needn't be expensive, though, as Fasthosts shows with its Linux Standard package, which includes 750MB of web space. For an additional charge, you can register a new domain name when you set up your account.

If the mere mention of Linux makes you worry that it will be complicated, don't. Linux is just the underlying server and you can upload files to your website in the normal way without ever having to worry about the technology being used.

For those who want a little more, choosing Linux gives you PHP, Perl and Python scripting. Scripting is turned off by default, but you can turn it on easily using your web-based control panel. You also get Secure Shell (SSH) access to your account, which lets you change file permissions manually and work directly on the server.

If that all sounds too complicated, those who are interested in creating basic web pages can stick with the control panel. This lets you manage and control every aspect of your domain. It's quite easy to use, although you'll find that you need to remember a lot of different usernames and passwords for each function.

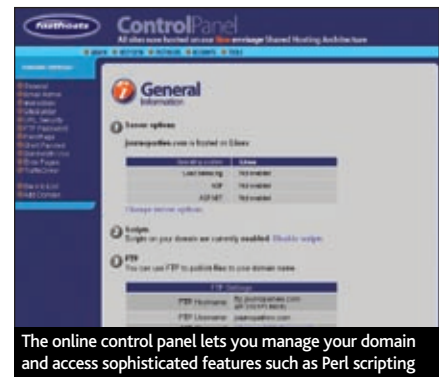


Find out how many visitors your website has attracted with Fasthost's MatrixStats tools

Help is also hard to find if you get stuck, as you have to log on to a support system using your Support ID and PIN. It would be better if help was available the second you log on to your account.

The email options are very thorough. You can have up to 200 standard mail boxes, each with 20MB of storage, and three Advanced Mailboxes with 100MB of storage and anti-virus and anti-spyware built in. This should be more than enough for your family. With webmail as standard from your domain (webmail.yourdomain.com), you need never be far away from your mail.

The SiteBuilder helps you to create a website. The Standard account lets you build a site with up to three pages. This works well, and the templates should suit most home users' needs. If you want more, you can pay £25 a year to create a site with up to eight pages or £45 for the unlimited option. Anything more than the basic, though, and you're probably better off buying some web creation software for your PC so that you can work offline.



The online control panel lets you manage your domain and access sophisticated features such as Perl scripting

One of the best things about running your own website is being able to see how many people have visited it. Fasthosts provides lots of information through MatrixStats. This tells you how many people have visited your site, how long they read it for and even if other sites refer to yours.

Fasthosts gives you a lot of web hosting for your money. Experienced users will welcome the advanced tools and scripting. If you're new to building websites, the 750MB of web space and 200 email boxes are still worth the money. We only wish the support system was easier to access and that there were fewer usernames and passwords.

David Ludlow



Cheap; 750MB space; excellent email support



Support system difficult to use; lots of different passwords

REQUIREMENTS Internet connection

HOTLIST CREATIVE & DESIGN SOFTWARE

ADOBE
Creative Suite 2

RATING ★★★★★

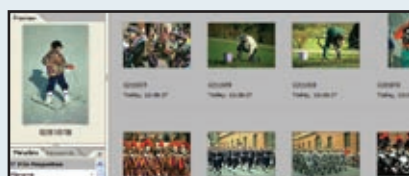
PRICE Standard edition £786 inc VAT
(upgrade £375); Premium edition £1,040
inc VAT (upgrade £500)

SUPPLIER Adobe 0131 458 6842

DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk

Creative Suite 2 is a superb bundle of high-end products that includes Photoshop, InDesign and Live Trace. The applications complement each other and are all neatly tied together under a single interface. Each application also features a range of new tools, such as Photoshop's Vanishing Point tool, which makes photo editing in perspective much easier. This suite is great value compared with the standalone prices.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000 or XP with QuickTime 6.5, 500MHz processor (1GHz recommended), 384MB RAM (1GB recommended), 2.5GB disk space



HOTLIST WEB DESIGN SOFTWARE

MACROMEDIA
Dreamweaver 8

RATING ★★★★★

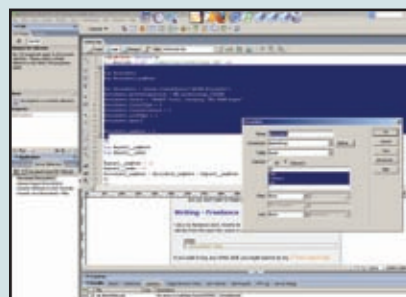
PRICE £400 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Macromedia Direct 0131 458 6766

DETAILS www.macromedia.com

If you have anything to do with developing professional websites, Dreamweaver 8 is the best £400 you'll ever spend. Miles ahead of the competition, it has everything. Whether you design the look of a site or incorporate dynamic data, Dreamweaver has the tools you need. It's too expensive for the home user, though.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 650MB disk space, 1,024x768-pixel display



HOTLIST DTP SOFTWARE

SERIF
PagePlus 11

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Serif 0800 376 7070

DETAILS www.serif.com

The latest version of Serif's PagePlus maintains the high quality set by previous incarnations. The best new feature is the ability to work directly with PDFs, which you can open, edit and save just as if they were native PagePlus documents.

The program also handles missing fonts well, which is an excellent feature for anyone who swaps and shares lots of documents. A tidy new user interface rounds off an excellent package.

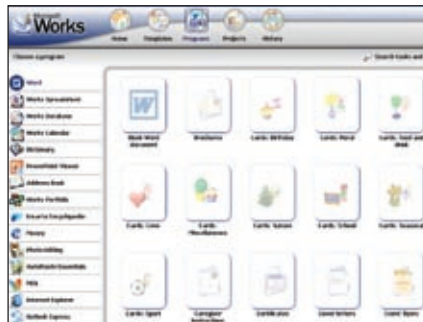
REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 240MB disk space



REVIEW OFFICE PACKAGE**MICROSOFT
Works Suite 2006**

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £69 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.microsoft.com/workssuite

The Microsoft Works interface provides easy access to each of the suite's applications

Everybody who owns a PC needs some kind of office software. Microsoft's Office suite is the obvious choice, but the Standard version of Office 2003 costs nearly £300. And this is overkill, as for most people the only essential element is Microsoft Word. Works Suite 2006 includes a copy of Word along with five other useful home office and leisure programs – Digital Image Standard, Money, AutoRoute Essentials, Encarta and the organiser that glues them all together, Works – and all for a street price of just £69 including VAT.

However, there is a catch. Rather than bundling the latest version of Word, Word 2003, Microsoft has included the older 2002 version. Word 2003 looks prettier, but the main changes lie beneath the surface. Word 2003 uses Microsoft's proprietary XML language. It offers better security, more options for tracking document changes and mark-up features used to prepare content for professional databases. So the inclusion of Word 2002 is a little disappointing.

The rest of the applications are up to date, though. Digital Image Standard 2006 replaces the Picture It! Program included in Works Suite 2005. It offers quick-fix editing tools aimed at casual

digital camera users, plus some cheesy frames and templates for greetings cards. Those who have a creative streak would be better served by Adobe's Photoshop Elements 3 or Corel's Paint Shop Pro X. Still, its organising features are worth having.

The next most useful program is Microsoft Money 2006. This personal finance package offers few benefits over its predecessor, although forgetful types will appreciate its reminder list of bills to be paid. Works, the interface that launches the other applications, includes a diary and templates for tasks such as planning a party and moving home.

The route planner included in Works Suite 2006 is a cut-down version. Known as AutoRoute Essentials and Streets & Trips, it offers all the basics including route planning, listing points of interest and creating lists of directions, and integrates with GPS receivers. Maps can be exported to Microsoft's Pocket Streets for use on a handheld computer.

Of greater educational interest is Encarta, Microsoft's PC-based encyclopedia. The Standard



The inclusion of Microsoft's encyclopedia software, Encarta, makes Works perfect for school homework

version included here has fewer multimedia resources, but it's still an ideal homework aid. If anyone in the household is in full-time education, you can buy Microsoft's Student and Teacher Edition of the full Office 2003 suite for just £85. Given that it lacks useful home software such as Money and Encarta, though, Works Suite is an all-round better buy.

Unless you plan to use your PC to run a small business, Works Suite is a stunning collection of software at a bargain price.

James Nixon

✓ Includes Microsoft Word and handy home software such as Money and Encarta

✗ Old version of Word

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 SE/Me, 700MHz processor, 128MB RAM (256MB recommended), 1.5GB disk space, Internet Explorer 6.
Product code B11-01360

HOTLIST REMOTE CONTROL SOFTWARE**3AM LABS
LogMeIn**

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Free; Professional edition

\$13 (around £7) per month

SUPPLIER www.3amlabs.comDETAILS www.logmein.com

If you have ever needed to access your PC while you've been away, LogMeIn is just the software for you. The free version gives you full remote control of your PC over the internet and works brilliantly.

The Professional version adds support for file transfers and guest invitations, and lets you use email to send links to files on your PC. It's an excellent piece of software for anyone who does a lot of remote work.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or above, Internet Explorer, broadband internet connection

**HOTLIST WEB BROWSER****MOZILLA
Firefox 1.0**

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Free

SUPPLIER www.firefox.com

Firefox 1.0 is by far the best web browser we've ever used. Introducing advanced features such as tabbed browsing and support for RSS feeds, it is leaps and bounds ahead of Internet Explorer. When you also consider that it's better at rendering pages and is free, there's little excuse not to use it.

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98 or above, 500MHz Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 52MB disk space

**HOTLIST PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE****ADOBE
Photoshop Elements 4.0**

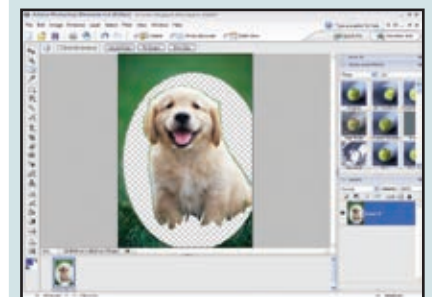
RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £68 inc VAT; upgrade £58

SUPPLIER www.microanvika.comDETAILS www.adobe.co.uk

The latest version of Photoshop Elements blows the competition away. It has stunning new organisation features, including the ability to search for photos that contain people's faces. With the best range of editing features on the market and a low price, this program is one for all photo-editing enthusiasts.

REQUIREMENTS Windows XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 800MB disk space. **Product code** AD07071A





REVIEW FILE COMPRESSION UTILITY

WINZIP
COMPUTING
WinZip 10 Pro

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$50 download (around £29 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.winzip.comDETAILS www.winzip.com

There are many reasons for using file compression. If you're stuck with a slow 56K dial-up internet connection, the reasons are obvious. By squeezing file sizes down, you spend less time sending them over the internet and save money on your phone bill. If you have broadband, the case is less clear-cut, especially as Windows XP has a basic form of file compression built in. If you are going to spend £29 on some software, it should offer something special.

Creating and managing Zip files with WinZip 10 is simplicity itself. Name the archive and browse for the files you want to include. Once created, you can drag and drop to add files to the zipped folder, and a WinZip dialog opens automatically. At any time, you can hover the mouse pointer over the archive for a list of its contents in a pop-up window.

Compression was variable; archives containing files that already use some form of compression showed small improvements. Our 187MB test folder of MP3 music tracks was squeezed down a mere 3MB to 184MB, barely two per cent. A similar result was achieved with JPEGs. A folder of assorted Word documents and PDFs fared better, but the resulting reduction of 25 per cent was little better than Windows' built-in compression could manage.

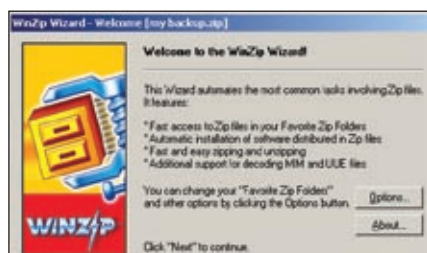
What WinZip 10 Pro does offer is a far greater degree of flexibility than Windows, with the ability to chop Zip files into custom-defined chunks. It also schedules backups directly to Zip archives with the option of 256-bit AES encryption for security, although the recipients of your files will need a copy of version 10 to decrypt them. Built-in disc burning may be useful for some, as will a tool to upload files directly to an FTP site.

But useful as it is to have all of these tools available in WinZip 10's new Windows Explorer-style interface, you can't help thinking these are functions you could already find elsewhere.

James Nixon

- ✓ Neat interface; scheduled backups and FTP functions useful for business users
- ✗ Most additional functions available elsewhere

REQUIREMENTS Windows 98/Me/2000/XP



WinZip's interface makes file compression simple, but many of its functions are available for free elsewhere

REVIEW DOCUMENT SUMMARY SOFTWARE

CORPORA
Summarize! 2.0

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$49 (around £29 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Corpora 01483 443000

DETAILS www.corporasoftware.com

When we first reviewed Summarize! it was an expensive product aimed at businesses. Version 2 is much more affordable but uses the same summarisation engine to reduce large documents to manageable summaries.

Summarize! works well and is quick, too. You specify a set number of words or a percentage of the document for the summary. The software 'reads' the document, understands the grammar and produces a summary that's well-worded and easy to understand. You'll probably have to play with the settings for each document to work out what's best.

There will be times when the bits of a document it highlights as important aren't. This is where profiles come in. You can create profiles that contain your own set of keywords. For example, if you're studying the Battle of Britain, 'Spitfire' might be one of the chosen words. This skewing has a noticeable effect and, if done carefully, greatly improves the results.

The application also lists a document's keywords. Selecting one highlights it throughout the summary. There's a link to the full document, but this opens Internet Explorer rather than the document's default application. It's also a shame that clicking on a summary paragraph doesn't link to the relevant section in the document. This would be a good way of getting full information.

The software integrates with Office, internet and email, and will summarise attachments, too. But the most impressive new feature is the Windows Explorer interface. Turn on the summary bar and Windows shows a summary of a selected document.

The new user-friendly interface and tools make this an excellent choice for anyone who works with large documents. Students in particular will love it.

David Ludlow

- ✓ Quickly summarises large documents; easy to use
- ✗ Summary paragraphs don't link to main text

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 256MB RAM, Microsoft Office 2000 or later, Internet Explorer 6



Cut long, tedious documents down to size with the newly affordable Summarize!

REVIEW TRANSLATION SOFTWARE

TRANSLUTION
Translution Pro

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £60 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Translution

DETAILS www.translution.com

If you've ever tried to use free online translation tools to converse with foreigners, you'll have realised how inadequate they are. Translution offers a much better service that integrates with Outlook.

You can pick the language for each recipient as you send a mail or add this information to your contacts book so that the process is automatic. The software translates between English, French, German, Spanish and Italian, and more languages will be added later. As each recipient's language is specified in their contact entry, you can write a single email and send it to speakers of different languages. We tested the French and German translation on a *Shopper* writer who speaks both, and the results were impressive.

The grammar was excellent and the translated text more natural than the free tools can manage. However, the quality of the translation relies on the grammatical quality of the original, so you have to be careful when writing your emails. As well as the translation, the recipient gets a copy of the original message. If they also have Translution, the program uses the original for any subsequent translations – if, say, they forward the message on. This prevents horrible multiple-translation errors.

If an email isn't translated on arrival, you can convert it manually by sending the email through Translution's servers. However, as the service spoofs your email address to make it look as if the email's from you, our spam filter blocked it.

Translution integrates with Microsoft Word and Internet Explorer. This is done on the fly and the results appear in the original application; we wish manual email translation was as neatly integrated. The program can also mark up text as Do Not Translate, which is handy for technical documents.

This is a brilliant tool for anyone who does a lot of foreign correspondence. There's a free version for those who need only the occasional translation.

David Ludlow

- ✓ Excellent translation; automatically sets translation language for Outlook contacts
- ✗ Convoluted email translation

REQUIREMENTS Windows 2000/XP, 350MHz Pentium III processor, 256MB RAM, 25MB disk space



Translution Pro knocks through the language barrier to promote universal understanding through email